MURRUMBIDGEE MATTERS
ISSUE 6 AUTUMN 2019

WAGGA OPENS MRI TO ALL PATIENTS

GRADUATE NURSES JOIN THE RANKS
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ABOUT US
Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) provides
a range of public health services to the Riverina and
Murray regions of NSW, Australia.

We provide services across a geographic area of
approximately 125,561 square kilometres to a population
of about 240,754 residents. People of Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander heritage make up four per cent of
the population.

As the largest employer in the region, with over 3,800
healthcare staff working across 33 hospitals and
12 primary health care centres, we are supported
by hundreds of volunteers who make an invaluable
contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care.

Our services are provided through:

• 1 Rural Referral Hospital
• 1 Base Hospital
• 8 District Health Services
• 5 Community Hospitals
• 16 Multipurpose Services
• 2 Mercy Care Public Hospitals
• 12 Community Health Posts
• 1 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service

PUBLICATION
We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of
the land covering MLHD and remind people that we live
and work on Aboriginal land.

Welcome to the sixth issue of Murrumbidgee Matters
Magazine.

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OUR VISION
Wellness is our Goal
Excellence is our Passion
Our People are Our Future
LOCAL patients will have free access to vital scanning services as a result of a new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) licence at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (WWBH).

The MRI licence means locals will be able to access a Medicare rebate for an estimated 3,354 services per year, which will save lives and reduce costs for patients.

Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Member for Riverina Michael McCormack said the announcement meant locals who had serious medical conditions, such as cancer, stroke or heart defects, would no longer have to pay hundreds of dollars for the service.

“This is fantastic news for the city and the wider Wagga Wagga region,” Mr McCormack said.

“This important investment means more patients will have greater access to eligible bulk-billed MRI scans.

“The last thing a family should be worrying about is whether a trip to the doctor will require an expensive MRI they cannot afford,” he said.

Patients will receive the Medicare-covered MRI services from March.

Murrumbidgee Local Health District Chief Executive Jill Ludford said she was delighted with the announcement which will be welcomed by patients across the region.

“This exciting news now means WWBH outpatients can be bulk-billed for approved Medicare items,” she said.

The WWBH MRI machine was commissioned in July 2016 and is the only public hospital service in the MLHD.
WELCOMING OUR NEW GRADUATE NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) is “growing its own” nursing and midwifery workforce.

This year MLHD has recruited 83 Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife graduates for its annual graduate intake program.

A record 59 graduates commenced in February (compared to 45 last year) and a further 24 will start throughout the year, with intakes in May and August.

Most of the graduates are from the local area, with many returning from their studies at metropolitan universities.

Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery Karen Cairney said it was wonderful to have so many local graduates seeking to start their careers in a rural setting.

“It is pleasing MLHD can offer employment to so many local graduates, keeping local people in local hospitals. We also welcome those graduates coming from across NSW to start their career in MLHD.”

Ms Cairney said the new nurses and midwives will be welcomed and supported with a comprehensive education and mentoring program to assist the safe transition from university into the workplace.

MLHD boasts a 78 per cent retention rate of graduates who remain within locals hospitals across the district.

“Each nurse and midwife is linked with local nursing and midwifery management and educators so they have access to clinical or personal support when needed.

“Throughout their first year, graduates are provided opportunities in a variety of clinical settings to ensure they gain a range of experience and consolidate skills and knowledge developed while at university.”

Ms Cairney said MLHD also provides ongoing opportunities for education and support from management to provide our communities with the best of care.

Between mid-2012 and mid-2018, MLHD has increased its workforce by an additional 374 full time equivalent staff – including more than 220 nurses.

Graduate nurses and midwives will begin employment with MLHD in 2019 at the following local hospitals:

Batlow, Boorowa, Corowa, Cootamundra, Culcairn, Deniliquin, Finley, Griffith, Gundagai, Harden, Henty, Hillston, Holbrook, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Narrandera, Temora, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong and Young.
A FAMILY TREND...
Mary’s decision to be a midwife continues a family trend for caring

*Article contributed by Jody Lindbeck, The Daily Advertiser*

There is probably something a little bit inevitable about Mary Joseph deciding she wanted to change careers and become a midwife.

Her grandfather Farmey Joseph was a respected Wagga Wagga GP, who had met his wife Felicity, then a nurse, at work.

Wagga Wagga-born Ms Joseph is the only midwife among 59 new registered nurse and midwife graduates who started work this week as part of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District’s (MLHD) annual graduate intake program.

The initial intake of 59 is an increase on the 45 from 2018, and a further 24 will join the MLHD with intakes in May and August.

Ms Joseph, 40, admits that she did indeed want to be a nurse when she was a child, but life took her in other directions.

She has worked as a court reporter at the High Court and more recently, in Sydney, as a researcher with the Catholic Archdiocese.

But midwifery beckoned and Ms Joseph juggled her studies at the University of Technology in Sydney with work.

She is now enthusiastic about walking into the ward for her first shift at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

“It’s very exciting,” Ms Joseph said.

Equally excited about his first day on the wards is Tim Hollis, who will be heading for a rotation in the coronary care ward.

Like Ms Joseph, Mr Hollis has been juggling his studies at University of Wollongong with his work in disability care.

The 29-year-old admits it was sometimes a bit difficult to strike a balance between work and study, but worth it because nursing was always the career he wanted.

“I’ve always been drawn towards caring for people,” he said.

While Ms Joseph has chosen to concentrate on midwifery, Mr Hollis admits he is keen to see where his career takes him.

“Nurses have so many opportunities to go out and make a real difference.”

Tim Hollis

Throughout their first year, graduates are provided opportunities in a variety of clinical settings to ensure they gain a range of experience and consolidate skills and knowledge developed while at university,” Ms Cairney said.

She said the MLHD had a 78 per cent retention rate of graduates who remain within locals hospitals across the district.

“Each nurse and midwife is linked with local nursing and midwifery management and educators so they have access to clinical or personal support when needed,” Ms Cairney said.

The MLHD’s executive director of nursing and midwifery Karen Cairney said the graduates would work in a number of settings in the months ahead.
Deniliquin locals know the NSW Health Pathology (NSWHP) staff as their friends, neighbours and a key part of their health care team.

But did you know the staff at the Deniliquin collection centre and laboratory are celebrating reaching more than 100 years of collective experience? Laboratory Manager David McPherson, who has been working in Deniliquin for 31 years, said this experience has been essential in providing a high standard in health care for the community.

“We’re very proud to be local people looking after locals and to have been doing so for many years,” Mr McPherson said.

“More than half of our staff members have been here for at least a decade and just under half have been here more than two decades.

“This is important because it means we can ensure that every time we take blood, run a test and provide results, we are providing an essential clinical service to an exceptional standard, for the benefit of the community.

“Experience is also essential when we are taking samples from children, older people and people with difficult veins – all patients we are proud to look after.”

Mr McPherson said NSWHP’s laboratory was always busy, running more than 52,000 tests in 2017/18, for more than 14,000 patients located in not only Deniliquin but also Finley, Hay, Jerilderie and Barham.

“The most common tests we run include kidney and liver function tests, full blood counts and cholesterol, but we also provide a wide range of other tests like microbiology (looking at disease-causing bacteria) and haematology (white cells, red cells and platelet function),” Mr McPherson said.

“We also perform blood matching and have a stock of blood ready for blood transfusions at Deniliquin Hospital with emergency supplies located at Hay Hospital.

“We love that every day we get to come to work to find clinical answers for our local patients, when they need it most.”

NSWHP’s Deniliquin collection centre is based at Deniliquin Hospital with newly extended operating hours from 8am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

DENILIQUIN PATHOLOGY

Did you know?

• The team at the Deniliquin lab are on-call 24/7 to provide an essential service for trauma and critical care patients.

• Deniliquin has a team of seven: three technical assistants, two technical officers, one hospital scientist and one laboratory manager.

• Hospital Scientist, Margaret Holschier, is our longest serving team member with 34 years’ experience. But we also have staff members who have called our Deniliquin service home for 31 years, 24 years and 10 years.

• We are part of a comprehensive network of other laboratories in the region that can provide results for more specialised and complicated tests for our Deniliquin patients. This allows our patients to have access to the most cutting edge technology whenever they need it.

• Amongst our staff we have a fully qualified private pilot, a former band frontwoman, a former publican, two Masters degrees and a choir member!
PATHOLOGY FACTS

• We may never meet the people working in laboratories behind the scenes, but they are a critical part of our healthcare system.

• 70 per cent of medical decisions rely on pathology. Results from pathology tests, including blood tests and biopsies, give doctors the information they need to correctly diagnose and treat their patients.

• The majority of cancers are also diagnosed by specialist doctors – anatomical pathologists.

• NSW Health Pathology’s dedicated staff of highly specialised doctors and scientists performs roughly 61 million tests each year and many of our facilities operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

• We also operate the world’s largest accredited point of care testing program with over 550 devices across 180 NSW hospitals. With reliable, real-time results, these diagnostic tools help clinicians provide faster urgent care when and where it’s needed most.

• Every Australian receives their first pathology test just days after they’re born. Half the Australian population will have a test this year.

• Our pathologists and scientists are experts in diagnosing and supporting patients with the most complex and life-threatening conditions. This includes patients in our public hospital emergency departments and intensive care units.

Virtual reality pathology video:

NSW Health Pathology invites you to come inside the exciting world of the laboratory and follow the journey of a blood sample in an innovative new virtual reality video.

Find out how our scientists transform a blood sample into a crucial diagnostic tool to ensure patients get the answers and treatment they need.

The virtual reality film can be viewed on NSW Health Pathology’s YouTube page: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhVzbfgvxM0.

PREGNANT WOMEN REMINDED TO GET FLU SHOT EARLY

Pregnant women are being reminded to get their free flu shot following an unusually high number of influenza cases in summer, many as a result of travellers returning from winter climates.

It is not unusual at this time of year to see a spike in flu cases with holiday makers returning from the colder Northern Hemisphere however this year, there has been a doubling of cases.

Dr Vicky Sheppeard, Director of Communicable Diseases Branch for NSW Health, said it is a timely warning for pregnant women to get a flu shot so the antibodies will help protect their babies until they are old enough to be vaccinated at six months of age.

The flu vaccine is free for pregnant women, Aboriginal people, those aged 65 years and over, or who have medical conditions such as severe asthma, diabetes and heart problems.

“Pregnant women in their final trimester who are due to give birth before April should get along to their GP, or their trained pharmacist, and get a free flu shot,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“For the rest of us, it is best to wait until the 2019 flu vaccine becomes available in April or May but if you are already unwell, avoid visiting hospitals, aged care facilities or infants.

“And remember, to prevent the spread of influenza, cough and sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands regularly, and stay home if you’re unwell.” ■
MENTOR PROGRAM HELP ENSURE SUCCESS FOR OUR FUTURE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Three Rivers University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) is committed to collaboration and innovation to create a sustainable rural health workforce. A recent partnership with the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD), the Ngungilanna Indigenous Student Centre, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health, Charles Sturt University and CATSINaM will support the provision of a mentorship program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.

The purpose of the mentor relationship is to provide clinical and cultural supportive care to nurses and midwives as they transition from university to the workforce. Increasing the support provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses aims to strengthen and improve recruitment and retention, and thus increases representation in the workforce. Three Rivers UDRH has been able to provide practical, collegial and financial support to this initiative and support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the program as a member of the collaborative.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through the first 12 months of their nursing career creates workplaces that are culturally safe and improves the experiences of both patients and clinicians.

Three Rivers Indigenous Health Success Lead and proud Wiradjuri women Jayarna Kay acknowledges the amazing work from all collaborative members, and their ongoing commitment to leading workforce change.

“As a leader in my community and as the Indigenous Health lead at Three Rivers, it is vitally important that we establish and maintain these strong partnerships to delivery successful outcomes. It is a duty of care to ensure that our programs are well supported and implemented effectively both culturally and professionally for when our nurses and midwives step out into the workforce. The collaboration of all members of the working group alongside our elders and wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been a deadly journey thus far, and the extensive knowledge, valued input, and behind the scenes work has been very well respected and acknowledged”, Ms Kay said.

The first two-day training program was held on 13 and 14 of February in Wagga Wagga and reached full capacity with plans to roll out to the Western Region footprint in April 2019.
As 2019 quickly unfolds, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new MLHD Board Members and several new managers at our health facilities.

**New Board members**
I am delighted that two businesswomen from the local region, Elizabeth Dixon from the Carrathool district and Elke Cleverdon from the Young district, have joined the 12-member MLHD Board.

Both women are leaders in their local rural communities and have a strong passion to improve the health outcomes of people across the MLHD.

They have extensive experience across a range of sectors, including healthcare and financial management, together with an understanding of the challenges of living remotely and access to healthcare.

The NSW Government formed Local Health District Boards in 2011 to devolve responsibility and accountability within the health system to improve local decision-making and patient care.

We welcome Elizabeth and Elke to our Board which works to ensure effective governance frameworks are in place to support high standards of patient care and services to our communities.

To read more about our new Board members, please see the story on page 12.

**New faces at our health services**
At our local health sites, we have appointed a number of new Facility Managers in 2019 who bring with them a wealth of experience to our local communities. We extend a warm welcome to:

- Amanda Culpan, Leeton Health Service
- Ann Turnbull, Corowa Health Service
- Danielle Miinchow, Junee Multipurpose Service (MPS)
- Holly Clark, Holbrook Health Service
- Tamar Howard, Lake Cargelligo MPS

The new facility managers are responsible for the operation and delivery of quality health services within their communities, working with local residents and our key partners to improve the health of local people.

With their extensive and varied careers in nursing and management, including international experience, our rural communities will benefit from their wide-ranging skills and expertise.

Read more about our new facility managers on page 10-11.

**Injecting a “fever” for quality and safety**
The MLHD Board and Executive are passionate that our clinical services are structured for safety and that staff are supported in their continual improvement for excellence.

We are working to build a stronger culture among our staff around safe and quality services for our communities.

Safe care is much more than the absence of preventable incidents, it is a component and a result of service excellence and improved patient outcomes and experience.

We are working with our clinicians across the region to deliver value-based healthcare to improve:

- the health outcomes that matter to patients
- the experience of receiving care
- the experience of providing care
- the effectiveness and efficiency of care

We seek to partner with consumers and patients about their own care, as well as their carers and family, to support them at this often vulnerable time of their lives.

**Our Patient Safety First Framework** is a patient-focused program for excellence in quality and patient safety and a commitment to continual service improvement.

The Board, senior managers and our staff all share a big role in safety and quality improvement. We are striving to create a culture where staff are empowered to speak up for safety.

We encourage you to never stop asking questions. Questioning leads to learning and improving.

The District applies an excellence lens over everything we do, supporting the work of all our staff to improve consumer experience and patient outcomes.
Amanda Culpan  
Facility Manager, Leeton Hospital  

I began my nursing career 30 years ago at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Over the following 10 years, I worked in a number of acute hospitals in Victoria while starting and raising my young family.

I discovered I liked teaching when supporting student nurses, so I went on to undertake a postgraduate Diploma of Training and Development at the University of Melbourne. This led to spending six years at Yooralla, a large disability service provider, where I led a team of nurse educators working with people with disability, their families and support staff to enable people with high and complex needs to live in the community, including people who are ventilator dependant.

I went back to study again, completing a Master of Health Administration, again at La Trobe University. I was employed by Western Health in Melbourne as a project manager to develop a new graduate nurse program in response to a state-wide shortage of funded places for newly graduated nurses. It was a great success.

Most recently, I was managing a primary health service within a correctional environment. This was a very rewarding role and again gave me the opportunity to support some of societies’ most vulnerable and overlooked people.

My family has now grown and working and studying in Melbourne. I moved to Leeton early in 2019 to discover a friendly and vibrant town. I have a great team here and have been given amazing support from management and everyone I have met across MLHD. I am loving it here!

Holly Clarke  
Facility Manager, Holbrook Hospital  

I commenced the role of Facility Manager at Holbrook in August 2018, prior to this I have worked in Intensive care for the last 12 years.

I began nursing at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, where I worked for four years starting my career in Coronary and Intensive Care Nursing.

I have travelled around Australia working in rural and metropolitan facilities ranging from Wudinna in South Australia to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane hospitals.

For the past seven years I have worked at Albury Wodonga Health in roles such as Assistant Director of Nursing, Project Management and the substantive role of Clinical Nurse Educator of Intensive Care.

I have completed a Graduate Certificate in Critical Care Nursing, Masters of Nursing Practice, Project Management Certification and I’m nearing completion of my Masters of Business Administration through Charles Sturt University.

I am married with two vivacious boys, four and six years old. We have built a home in Thurgoona north of Albury. I am the Fundraising Coordinator for Thurgoona Public School P & C and love to spend weekends with the family at the park, pool or with friends.

My role at Holbrook Health Service has seen me move from education into management. I am enjoying the change and working with the excellent team at Holbrook.

Danielle Miinchow  
Facility Manager, Junee Multipurpose Service (MPS)  

After graduating from Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, I completed a graduate nurse program at Calvary Hospital in Wagga Wagga.

I worked at Junee Correctional Centre before I started my interstate nursing path.

I worked at Royal Darwin Hospital in the Emergency Department, at The Canberra Hospital (TCH) in the Emergency Department (ED) as a Registered Nurse, a Clinical Development Nurse and the Clinical Nurse Educator. I was also a member of the TCH Leadership and Management team for the ED.

I then worked at the Lyell McEwan Hospital in Adelaide as an advanced Registered Nurse in the ED.

I moved back to Wagga Wagga to take up a position as Acting Deputy Director of Nursing in an aged care facility.

I am excited to be the New Facility Manager at Junee MPS, and believe that with the development of our nursing staff we can provide the capabilities of advanced health care in the Riverina.
I work as an Obstetrician Gynaecologist at the specialist clinics at Griffith Base Hospital. I've been working and living in Griffith for just over 12 months and I really value the service we provide. The patients are friendly and very respectful and they remind me of the patients I used to treat in my home town. People often ask me if women patients prefer female doctors and I always say that women want a doctor who is going to treat them well and gender bias usually doesn’t come into it. What matters most is the care people receive. When I was a young obstetrician I even delivered one of my own daughters!

I grew up in Northern India at Lucknow near Delhi. I was a bad asthmatic as a child and aspired to be a doctor so that I could treat myself. I always knew I would study medicine and went on to complete postgraduate studies in Management, Neonatal Intensive Care, Public Health and Clinical Nursing. My passion in health care is equitable healthcare for rural and remote communities, closing the gap, and offering culturally competent healthcare to all Australians.

In the past 10 years I have worked in Melbourne, across The Kimberley (WA), East Arnhem (NT), rural western Victoria, and central Australia. I look forward to meeting the local and surrounding community and settling into life in beautiful Lake Cargelligo.

Since that time I have worked in a variety of health settings in different roles including remote area, hospitals and community.

The last 10 years, I have been based largely overseas, initially working in Kuwait for two and a half years as the Director or Nursing, commissioning new hospitals and clinics.

I then joined Australian Red Cross, with my first deployment to Iraq as a Teaching Intensive Care Unit/Emergency Department nurse. This was followed by deployments to South Sudan, Somalia and Bangladesh as a Hospital Administrator.

I have been based in Corowa for the last 20 years, so I am now very content to be home, to be part of this community, share some of my experiences and continue to promote Corowa Health service as a proactive and customer-service orientated organisation.
Meet Our Board

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: New Board Directors

We have welcomed two new Board members from the local region.

Board Chair Gayle Murphy said she was delighted to announce the appointment of Elizabeth Dixon from the Carrathool district and Elke Cleverdon from the Young district to the 12-member MLHD Board.

Physiotherapist and small business founder, Elizabeth Dixon provides local and telehealth clinical services and is based at a farming enterprise near Carrathool. She previously worked at The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, as a Senior Neurological, Trauma and Intensive Care Unit Physiotherapist as well as a researcher and trial project manager.

Ms Dixon has recently completed her Master of Business Administration (MBA) with an interest in utilising health innovation and digital technology to improve patient outcomes and is also a member of the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network Clinical Advisory Council.

A rural financial counsellor and a MBA qualified business consultant at Young, Elke Cleverdon is also a Fellow Certified Practicing Accountant (FCPA) and a farming enterprise business partner in Harden. She has held a number of executive roles over the years including Deputy General Manager & Chief Financial Officer for 16 years at South West Slopes Credit Union. Elke has extensive experience and expertise in enterprise wide risk management and strategy building and review.

Ms Cleverdon is a Director of Local Land Services (LLS) - Riverina and Chair of the Hilltops Council Regional Economic Development Committee. She holds NSW State pre-qualification for audit & risk committee membership for NSW agencies and serves on the LLS State Audit & Risk Committee. Previous board appointments include the NSW State Council for Women’s Economic Development and Regional Development Australia – Southern Inland Committee.

Ms Murphy said the new board members were appointed by the NSW Health Minister for their substantial skills in governance, finance and health delivery.
As a new year commences Chief Executive, Jill Ludford, and I begin our very important site visits. During 2019 we will visit every one of our hospitals and Multipurpose Services (MPS) in Murrumbidgee Local Health District including community health and the mental health teams. We also visit the Community Health Centres in Tooleybuc and Moulamein as well as our administration office in Albury to meet with groups such as People and Culture and Population Health.

This is my seventh year of visits and for Jill it is her fourth as Chief Executive. This year we have already completed visits to Junee and Coolamon MPS’s with Gundagai and Tumut not too far away.

The site visits are so important as Jill and I learn so much about each of our sites who may have something in common with their neighbours but at the same time have many special features.

On each of our visits we strive to meet as many staff as possible, speak to patients and their carers, meet with the Local Health Advisory Committee, Local Government representatives and where possible local GPs. We begin each visit with a walk through the facility, talking to lots of people on the way. This is like a “walking survey” which is a very popular way of gathering information.

We share with staff important messages such as No Tolerance to Bullying and Aggression, the importance of keeping safe and how their communities have such high regard for them and the work they do. One of the things that staff tell Jill and I is about the importance of team work in good health care models. All staff have an important role to play whether it is administration officers, nursing staff or HealthShare staff.

The drive to each site is just as important as the visit. We travel the same roads as many residents do to receive more specialised treatment such as renal care. We also pass through many small communities that do not have a designated health service but are entitled to the same health care as those in larger communities.

MLHD Board Chair Gayle Murphy

## 2019 CALENDAR DATES

### MARCH

- **Temora Disability Services Expo**  
  Friday 29 March 2019  (10 am to 3pm)  
  Temora Ex-Services Club

- **Arthritis Awareness Week**  
  23 March - 1 April 2019

### APRIL

- **World Parkinson’s Day**  
  11 April 2019

- **MLHD Excellence Awards**  
  Nominations Open  
  15 April 2019

- **World Haemophilia Day**  
  17 April 2019

### MAY

- **International Day of the Midwife**  
  5 May 2019

- **International Nurses Day**  
  12 May 2019

- **MLHD Excellence Awards**  
  Nominations Close  
  27 May 2019

### JUNE

- **Bowel Cancer Awareness Month**

### JULY

- **MLHD Excellence Awards**  
  19 July 2019

### AUGUST

- **Daffodil Day**  
  Friday 23 August 2019

### SEPTEMBER

- **Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**

### OCTOBER

- **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

### NOVEMBER

- **National Skin Cancer Action Week**  
  18-24 November 2019

- **World Sepsis Day**  
  13 September 2019

- **World Heart Day**  
  29 September 2019

- **National Stroke Week**  
  12-18 September 2019

- **World Asthma Day**  
  1-6 September 2019

- **Suicide Prevention Day**  
  10 September 2019

- **National Asthma Week**  
  1-6 September 2019

- **National Stroke Week**  
  12-18 September 2019
Rural Pathways to Post-Graduate Medical Training

WAGGA WAGGA
GRIFFITH
RIVERINA

We can:
• Give you the information you need about rural medical training pathways
• Help navigate a rural medical training pathway for your career
• Connect you to career advice from rural specialists

Contact Us
Ph: 02 8204 4607  Int Ph: 4607  Email: RRTHenquiries@nd.edu.au

HOW CAN WE FUTURE-PROOF THE RURAL MEDICAL WORKFORCE: REGIONAL TRAINING HUBS

There is no one answer to this question and probably lots of ways even to interpret the question itself.

One of the keys, and there is evidence to support this, is in providing rural study, training and career opportunities. The national Regional Training Hub program is building on the success of Rural Clinical Schools and University Departments of Rural Health across Australia to provide rural medical study opportunities. Most of the work done in the national Regional Training Hubs program happens quietly and generally is not noticeable, but we are making a difference.

In our local region the Riverina Rural Training Hub has now been working successfully with local stakeholders for the last 18 months to do this. Together we have:

• encouraged medical students to apply to do as much of their training as they can rurally and supporting those with families by finding partner employment, schooling and childcare. We have made over 25 presentations to various groups talking about rural medicine

• supported final year medical students to apply for postgraduate training places at rural and regional hospitals for their two years of hospital training. At Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in 2019, 19 of the 23 junior doctors who commenced there this year are from rural clinical schools

• created new rurally anchored specialist training pathways for junior doctors committed to working rurally. Nearly 70 per cent of their training is rurally-based

• individualised medical student pathways for study, training and careers

• provided medical education and training based here in the Riverina Murrumbidgee not previously accessible

An exciting project commenced at the end 2018 to develop an integrated tool to record, monitor and forecast medical workforce needs in the region until 2030. While lead by the Riverina Rural Training Hub, there is wonderful support from people and organisations with similar objectives of improving rural health outcomes to create, populate and use this tool. ■
NEW INTERN DOCTORS WELCOMED TO MLHD

Murrumbidgee Local Health District has welcomed 27 new doctors as part of the new cohort of interns starting across NSW.

“Interns are a vital part of the professional team at the frontline of the health system,” Chief Executive Jill Ludford said.

“We are very happy to greet this new team of enthusiastic and talented doctors who want to make a difference, and develop their skills in the public health system.”

Ms Ludford said 25 of the new interns will be employed at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and two at Griffith Base Hospital.

“NSW with 1021 intern positions - up from 999 last year – has more intern positions than any other state or territory, up 251 positions – or 32 per cent – since 2011.

During their one-year internship, the graduates will complete compulsory terms in the specialties of medicine, surgery and emergency as required by the Medical Board of Australia. While the second year focuses on consolidating professional practice and experience in different clinical settings.

The interns will rotate through a network of metropolitan, regional or rural hospitals, as well as GP practices. ■
DOCTOR NAMED CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital doctor, Matthew Lennon, was named Young Citizen of the Year at the city’s Australia Day Awards.

Matthew, 25, was recognised for his work in rural health and mentoring students to train and continue to work in rural and regional areas.

Part of this vision involved the formation of Doctors for Rural Education and Medicine (DREAM).

Despite his youth, Matthew is an outstanding leader in rural health and high school education. Matthew founded Doctors for Rural Education and Medicine (DREAM), to mentor and inspire medical students to train and remain doctors in the bush.

Since 2013 he has run Springboard Education (a charity offering free tutoring to rural children), inspiring hundreds of local students to excel in education and follow careers in healthcare.

PHOTO: Citizen of the Year Matthew Lennon is pictured with Wagga Wagga Australia Day Ambassador Dane Simpson and Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga Councillor Greg Conkey OAM.

Matthew is renowned for running rural appreciation weekends for visiting students and doctors interested in pursuing a rural health career.

Matthew is also very active in community organisations, volunteering at the Palliative Care Unit and assisting struggling students.
The inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing Yarn Up was recently held in Wagga Wagga.

The Yarn Up is an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives in MLHD to come together with local elders and peers to build on their connection to culture.

These connections will strengthen relationships to better support the workforce in the delivery of culturally safe nursing and midwifery care.

Yarn Ups will be held regularly at different locations across the District.

The Health District remains committed in ensuring the delivery of culturally safe care to our patients and consumers.
How to Seek Mental Health Support

People often don’t know where to start to get the mental health services they need.

Your local GP or other health professionals can help connect you with the right mental health service, says Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD).

“Seeking help is often the first step towards getting and staying well, but it can be hard to know how to start or where to turn,” said District Community Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Manager Alison Thorne.

“It’s common to feel unsure and to wonder whether you should try to handle things on your own. It is always okay to ask for help – even if you’re not sure you are experiencing a specific mental health problem.

You might want to seek help if you’re:

• worrying more than usual
• finding it hard to enjoy your life
• having thoughts and feelings that are difficult to cope with, which have an impact on your day-to-day life
• interested to find more support or treatment.
• worried about someone that you live with or care for

Anyone in distress who presents at a hospital Emergency Department (ED) in MLHD has access to timely mental health assessment via the Mental Health Emergency Consultation Service (MHECS).

MHECS operates out of Wagga Wagga and skilled mental health clinicians provide mental health assessments to people in all EDs across MLHD via videoconference.

Once assessed, the clinician consults with the on-call psychiatrist about the person’s ongoing needs.

According to their level of risk, the person might need admission to an Acute Mental Health Inpatient Unit (usually Wagga Wagga), admission to the local hospital for a short stay for support and stabilisation, referral to the relevant Community Mental Health team or referral to the person’s GP.

MLHD Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol teams operate an outreach service to all smaller towns across the District. There are six Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol teams across MLHD – Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Deniliquin, Temora, Young and Tumut – who operate outreach services to all communities.

These teams provide regular visits and include services across the lifespan, including Specialist Child and Adolescent, Adult and Older Persons clinicians.

Referrals to Community Mental Health services can be made via Accessline 1800 800 944.

Accessline provides 24 hour/7 day per week support, advice and referral to mental health and drug and alcohol services for people anywhere within MLHD.

“Anyone with a mental health issue can use Accessline to speak with a mental health professional and be directed to the right care for them,” Alison said.

Carers, other health professionals and emergency workers can also use Accessline for advice about a person’s clinical symptoms, the urgency of the need for care and local treatment options.

If you or someone you care about has a mental health or drug or alcohol problem and you would like to talk to someone, call Accessline on freecall 1800 800 944.
Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) CEO Melissa Neal said that with funding from the Australian Government MPHN commission a variety of mental health services throughout the Murrumbidgee region, which address community needs and the level of care and support individuals may require. All services commissioned by MPHN are free to access.

“We are committed to ensuring people receive the right services at the right time and in the right place, therefore we commission services within a stepped care approach.

“In a stepped care approach, a person seeking support is connected to the services that meet their needs and as their needs change, the services change with them,” Ms Neal said.

Ms Neal said services available include the low intensity program, NewAccess, and moderate to high intensity programs, such as Strong Minds and Well Connected.

In addition, there are telehealth funded services – Connect and Connect for Kids – and local GPs have access to the GP Psychiatry Support Line, which provides support in psychiatric presentations in general practice.

“Suicide prevention is vital. We fund both the Wagga Wagga and Griffith headspace centres, The Way Back Support service, and suicide prevention training – particularly QPR (Question Refer Persuade) online training.

“There are some great online resources including the websites Head to Health and Healthdirect.

“More information about services available across the region and a factsheet is available on our website (mphn.org.au),” Ms Neal said.

Early intervention plays a key role in mental health care which is why the NSW Government is working with its agencies, Commonwealth and local governments, and community organisations to deliver suicide prevention initiatives.

Recently the NSW Government announced $90 million over the next three years will be invested in a first of its kind Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW.

The framework will bring a greater focus on building community wellbeing to avoid entering suicidal crises and provide the fundamental principles of suicide prevention to help communities develop essential strategies that meet their own local health care needs.

It’s expected initiatives from the Framework will have the biggest impact on suicide in NSW the State has ever seen and will ensure we reduce the number of lives lost to suicide in NSW.

These initiatives will be delivered across NSW, including in MLHD.

In this year’s State Budget people living with mental illness, their families and carers will benefit from a record investment of $2.1 billion in mental health services and infrastructure.
JOE’S GATE: This year is the first that 98-year-old Joe Reardon has not manned the gate at the Gundagai Pastoral & Agricultural Show for 76 years.

Gundagai Multipurpose Service (MPS) Nurse Emily Mackenzie made sure Joe, a resident at the MPS and much-loved and respected member of the community, did not miss out.

Emily took Joe down to the show to catch up with old mates, see the exhibits and stop by the gate named in his honour.

This is just one example of the care, compassion and dedication shown by our nurses to the residents living in our aged care facilities across our District.
GUNDAGAI: Christine Field was presented with a certificate of appreciation for all her hard work in ensuring Gundagai MPS was safe for staff, patients, residents, visitors and contractors over the past 11 years. Pictured here with Debbie Cations, Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Advisor Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing; Jane Turner, Gundagai MPS Manager and Work Health and Safety to Deputy Facility Manager, Krista Mitchell.

YOUNG: Young Hospital Auxiliary purchased a SonoSite Ultrasound for the Emergency Department. It is a state-of-the-art diagnostic tool with a large price tag of over $45,000. The Auxiliary members have worked tirelessly to raise money with various stalls and raffles and their highly successful Soup Day. They have just held a wonderful High Tea with all proceeds going towards the purchase of the ultrasound.

PHOTO ABOVE: Left to right: Janice Ward, Sue Thackeray, Angela Clark, Helen Holland, Debbie Smith, Libby Plumley, Gail Smith, Nancy McGregor, Helen Parrott, Lyn Freudenstein.

PHOTO RIGHT: Guests Judy Hesketh, Kathy Sams, Barbara McCrae enjoying Young Hospital Auxiliary High Tea.

LEETON: Registered Nurse Kerry Maguire would love to see more young people take up the profession. Mrs Maguire has been a nurse for close to 30 years and has worked at the Leeton District Hospital since 1990.

The Registered Nurse and Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Emergency Department believes she has been fortunate to work in Leeton.

“I’ve gained so much experience here … I’ve been able to work in many different areas, including as a nurse in the blood bank, radiology, theatre, community and district nursing, acute care and Carramar aged care,” she said. “I’ve been in the emergency department in Leeton since 2009.”

Mrs Maguire had undertaken plenty of training to get to where she is today, including her registered nursing studies through Charles Sturt University in Bathurst.

One thing she would like to see more of is young people taking up the profession.

“I thoroughly recommend a career in nursing,” Mrs Maguire said.

Photo courtesy of The Leeton Irrigator
Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) CEO Melissa Neal is encouraging local community groups, councils and organisations across the region to consider applying for a Murrumbidgee Community Grant for activities to support mental health and wellbeing of communities living with the impact of drought.

“We know the impact of drought extends beyond farmers and their families in rural communities, and these grants have been designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of our communities,” Ms Neal said.

“Community groups can apply for a grant for activities such as a community barbecue to connect people, regular exercise or yoga classes, or community education or workshops around managing stress or anxiety.

“Businesses might also consider upskilling their workforce on topics like mental health first aid, or look to implement some form of evidence-based training to help identify warning signs around mental health and suicide.

“Small rural communities are always very resourceful and innovative when it comes to supporting each other and we are really looking forward to seeing what community-led activities are developed to access these grants,” she said.

Empowering Communities Steering Committee member and volunteer community mental health advocate from Stockinbingal, John Harper, said the heart of grants is about supporting a whole of community approach to mental health and suicide prevention.

“These grants encourage and empower local rural communities to look for proactive approaches to mental health support suicide prevention,” Mr Harper said.

“It really is part of a holistic strategy for addressing mental health in our local communities who are feeling the impacts of drought and I would expect activities receiving grants will help build and strengthen relationships within communities as well.

“I congratulate MPHN for working hard to get these grants off the ground quickly and committing to a simple application process. I definitely encourage all community groups, councils and businesses to develop a suitable activity and apply for funding,” he said.

For more information about Murrumbidgee Community Grants visit www.mphn.org.au/drought-support

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency call AccessLine 1800 800 944, Lifeline 13 11 14 or call 000.
Advisory Committees welcome new members

Local Health Advisory Committees (LHAC) across the region welcomed new members in 2019.

Local farmer Gavin Hulm has joined the Coolamon committee, bringing strong connections to the community through his rural and sporting links.

“We are very pleased to welcome Gavin to our committee, he brings a male perspective and is enthusiastic about advocating for services in our community,” said Coolamon LHAC Chair Clare Munro.

“I want to promote and improve the services we have and help in the mental health side of rural health,” said Gavin.

“Our primary role is to be a voice for health services in our community,” said Ms Munro. “We are also involved in a number of initiatives which we think are priority areas for our community.”

LHACs meet monthly and are actively involved in a variety of health initiatives across the region. Many are active in supporting rural mental health initiatives, cancer screening promotion and raising awareness around advance care planning directives.

Other new members include Temora motelier and former councillor Irene Broad who has joined the Temora LHAC, Sessie Jele who was appointed to West Wyalong and Robyn Dowdle at Lockhart LHAC.

Griffith LHAC welcomed local education professional Carla De Valentin bringing strong connections to the Griffith area through her training and community links, as well as new staff representative Lucinda Gidlow.

In the MIA, Leeton Shire Council’s community service manager Wendell Peacock was appointed at Leeton and local school principal Yvan Chambers joined Hay LHAC.

Meanwhile, Tumbarumba LHAC welcomed three new recruits: Karen Doyle, Maria Anderson and Liam Kelso. Four new members join the team at Henty: Felicity Klemke, Brad Wettern, Mary D’Arcy Liston an Emily Jones.

Young LHAC also welcomed two new members: community representative Mary Johnson and staff representative Samantha Dewick.

For more information about Local Health Advisory Committees visit the MLHD website: https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/get-involved

L-R Griffith LHAC Chair Margaret King with staff representative Lucinda Gidlow and new LHAC member Carla De Valentin. Photo courtesy of The Griffith Area News

“I’m particularly interested in increasing access to health services and in improved awareness of children and families about the available services,” said Mr Chambers.

Here’s your opportunity to become a major sponsor for the event of the year!

The 2019 Murrumbidgee Local Health District Excellence Awards celebrate the achievements of individuals and teams for their pursuit of excellence and commitment to improving the lives of others.

They recognise innovation, excellence, collaboration and quality and safety initiatives and approaches that impact on services provided for residents across the Murrumbidgee.

To find out more contact Setchen Brimson on 0477 359 764 or email setchen.brimson@health.nsw.gov.au

Nominations open on Monday 15 April - so get in quick!
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